Teaching with Lectures Online

If you've designed a lecture course, you most likely have class meetings that focus students on your well-designed and well-paced presentations with pauses that engage students and help them process the new ideas and concepts you are presenting. It can be daunting to think about how to replicate that experience in an online environment, but it can be done.

Consider what you do in your face-to-face class

First, think about the daily rhythm of your face-to-face classes.
- Do you normally lecture the whole time?
- Do you regularly pause your lectures to see whether students understand what's going on or have questions? Are these pauses typically structured (e.g., "take a moment to write your answer to the following . . . .") or unstructured (e.g., "Does anyone have any questions?)?

After you have identified your typical approach to a class period, you are ready to consider how you might recreate this approach for the online environment.

Structure your lectures for an online environment

There are multiple ways to make lecture content available for students. You might choose from one of the three options below.

Option 1: Create more detailed PowerPoint slides or notes in lieu of lecture.
One option for moving your lectures online is to give students your notes, possibly with more of the detail filled in. Make sure that you are providing the kinds of explanations that will clarify complex ideas: we know what we mean when we use disciplinary concepts and terminology, but our students often need more explanation than we might realize. Avoid presenting students with a document that is simply an outline: they need your expert clarification.

Option 2: Continue to give your lecture live but record it.
If you choose to continue to give your lecture "live" during your normal class period using Zoom, record your lecture so that students who can't attend your class meeting can view it. It is advantageous to have a recorded lecture because this allows them to return to and re-listen to sections of the lecture that they need to hear again. Keep in mind that students (like all of us) lose focus after 10-15 minutes. You can work productively with this natural limit to attention: require students to pause and do a short activity (see examples below) after each 10-15 minute segment.

Option 3: Create short videos or PowerPoint slides with voice recordings.
Providing pre-recorded lectures to students can allow students to engage with the content on their own timeframe. It is also advantageous to have a recorded lecture because this allows them to return to and re-listen to sections of the lecture that they need to hear again. Keep in mind that students (like all of us) lose focus after 10-15 minutes. You can work productively with this natural limit to attention: require students to pause and do a short activity (see examples below) after each 10-15 minute segment. See the Helpful Tools

section below to learn about how you can record your lectures and make them available to students.

Strategies for making the most of online lectures

<u>Chunk your lecture into segments of about 10-15 minutes.</u>
Students' attention can begin to wander very quickly when they are passive. While we hope students are actively attending to and processing our lectures, we can ensure that active attention and processing by embedding rigorous work for them to do during our lecture by requiring them to respond to prompts, problems, or polls.

<u>Create online lecture pauses to ensure student learning.</u>
It is helpful for your students to pause and reflect or work during and after segments of your lecture: this ensures that they will process and begin to integrate the concepts or skills that your lecture communicates. These can be informal or more formal student activity pauses. Aim to use lecture pauses frequently, at least once every 10 minutes or so. This ensures that students can process and begin to integrate what they are learning and make the most of your lecture.

- You can prompt less formal responses that encourage students to reflect and write about what they've just read or heard. These prompts can appear in bold font in a printed lecture, be given verbally in a recording, or be both read out and written on a PowerPoint slide in a recorded PowerPoint lecture. Here is an example: "Now that you've learned more about X principle, jot down two ways that it might influence the process of Y. Pause the lecture and take a couple of minutes to generate some ideas in writing." If you want to make this slightly more formal, create a Blackboard Journal for students where they can record their ideas.
- You can prompt more formal responses that require students to do higher order thinking like solve problems, analyze scenarios or cases, or make a prediction about a study. You can also prompt quicker formal responses that require students to work at a somewhat less complex level by asking them to do things like come up with a novel examples of phenomena, explain a term in their own words, or describe how two concepts differ. Again, students can respond in a Blackboard Journal or, if you want these responses to be more interactive, you can create a Discussion Board where students can share their ideas and then see others' ideas.
- If you are lecturing live, you can require students to weigh in on problems by using Zoom Polls. For example, students might see a problem and have to choose which of four options would be the best first step to take to solve that problem. This allows you to quickly see how they are thinking and respond in real time to confusions their responses reveal.

<u>Interact with your students.</u>
In a face-to-face classroom, we can move around the room as we lecture and we often create a feeling of interaction when we throw out a question to the class or when we respond to students' body language or invite their the questions. This interactive feeling can get lost in the online environment. Asking students to respond to a thinking or writing prompt can help them feel that they are listening to your lecture for a reason—to use that lecture to solve a real problem or tackle a challenge. Alternately, you can ask them to attack

a problem that you pose at the beginning of your lecture and then promise them that the solution will be embedded in the lecture. Now your lecture will answer the questions that have been raised for them as they attempted that initial problem.

Helpful tools

When you've identified the way(s) in which you plan to give lectures, you will want to identify tools that you can use. Below are some suggestions.
Tools that can help you conduct live lectures
- You can hold lectures live and record them using Zoom.
- Zoom Poll is a tool that will allow students to respond to your lecture.

Tools that can help you pre-record lectures
- You can record lectures using Zoom.
- PowerPoint will allow you to add narration and timing to slides. (You have access to PowerPoint and the entire suite of Office 365 tools through ITS.). Once recorded, there are several options for making your lecture available to students.
- Blackboard Journals, Discussions, and Quizzes are tools that will allow students to respond to your lectures.

Challenges you may face—and how to respond

- **Your students may not be able to meet at class time**. If you are giving "live" lectures, record them so that students who now may be in a different time zone or whose schedule is now upended by returning home. Consider that many students find that it is advantageous to have a recorded lecture because this allows them to return to and re-listen to sections of the lecture that they need to hear again.
- **Your students might miss the social aspect of meeting as a class, but you don't want to (or can't) lecture live every day**. Even if you don't want to deliver live lectures for an entire class period, consider holding a Zoom meeting during the first few minutes of your typical class meeting time. Even doing this occasionally can give students an opportunity to see you and some of their classmates.
- **You may be faced with more student writing than you're used to seeing.** If you create Journals, Discussions, or short Quizzes on Blackboard, you may initially feel overwhelmed with students' work. Rather than responding to each individual student, look over the class's work as a whole and respond with feedback that shows you have read and analyzed their thinking. Share with the class in writing or in a short video what the trends were in student work and highlight a few really insightful posts, responses, or answers.

Get support
- As you consider your options for teaching with lectures online, we encourage you to get support by consulting with ITLAL. We look forward to working with you.
- If you need detailed help with features in Zoom or Blackboard, email askIT@albany.edu or submit a Help Request.